

**UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION FOR:**

**HYDRAULIC OVERSHOT TOOL WITHOUT A NOZZLE,  
AND METHOD OF RETRIEVING A CYLINDER**

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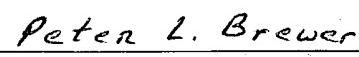
**ADRIAN VUYK, JR.**

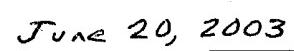
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**HYDRAULIC OVERSHOT TOOL WITHOUT A NOZZLE,  
AND METHOD OF RETRIEVING A CYLINDER**

**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

[0001] This application is related to a co-pending U.S. patent application entitled "Hydraulic Overshot Tool," being filed simultaneously herewith. The named inventors on that pending application are Adrian Vuyk, Jr., Dean Calhoun and John Roberts. The related patent application is herein incorporated by reference.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

**Field of the Invention**

[0002] The present invention relates to retrieval tools. More specifically, the present invention pertains to overshot tools used for retrieving a cylindrical body that has become lodged or otherwise lost within a wellbore.

**Description of the Related Art**

[0003] In the formation of a hydrocarbon or other wellbore, a cylindrical hole is formed vertically through a series of earth formations. Typically, the wellbore is first formed by rotating a drill bit downward at the lower end of a drill string. Traditionally, the drill string has been lowered into the wellbore by threadedly connecting a series of pipe joints, and then rotating those pipe joints in order to impart rotational movement to the drill bit downhole.

[0004] During the drilling of a wellbore, it is not uncommon for the operator of the rig to lose the ability to rotate the drill bit downhole. For example, a lower portion of the drill string may become fatigued and separate due to the high torque forces imparted during the drilling process. In this respect, those of skill in the art will understand that wellbores generally are not formed in a perfectly vertical plane; instead, the movement of the drill bit tends to form a "corkscrew" profile as the drill bit moves downward into the earth. This, in turn, creates tremendous frictional forces, or "drag," between a drill string and a surrounding earth formation. When

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this occurs, the upper section of drill pipe must be removed from the hole, and a fishing tool deployed in an attempt to retrieve the parted lower portion of drill pipe and connected drill bit.

[0005] In order to retrieve the parted drill string left downhole, an overshot tool has been traditionally used. A well-known example of such an overshot tool is the Bowen Series 150 releasing and circulation overshot tool. An exemplary overshot tool of the Bowen-type is shown at **10** in **Figure 1**. This overshot tool, and others of similar arrangement, has been known and used in the oil industry for many years.

[0006] As seen in **Figure 1**, the overshot tool **10** first comprises a body **12**. The body **12** defines an elongated tubular member having an upper end and a lower end. The upper end and the lower end are each internally threaded. The upper end is threadedly connected to a top sub **(11)**. The top sub **11** serves as a connector between the body **12** of the overshot tool **10** and the working string (not shown). The lower end, in turn, is threadedly connected to a guide member **14**. The guide member **14** aids in running the overshot tool **10** into the wellbore and over the parted drill string downhole for retrieval. Other tools, such as a circular milling tool, may also be attached below the body of the overshot tool. The milling tool (not shown) typically comprises carbide inserts disposed around a donut-shaped body.

[0007] As shown in **Figure 1**, the inner diameter of the overshot tool body **12** has a serrated profile. This means that a series of ramp surfaces **16** are placed along the inner diameter of the body **12**. In one arrangement, the ramp surfaces **16** are spiraled along the inner surface of the body. In the view shown in **Figure 1**, the ramp surfaces **16** are generally symmetrical.

[0008] A separate gripping member **18** is disposed within the body **12**. Where the ramp surfaces **16** are spiraled, the gripping member **18** is also spiraled. For the overshot tool **10** of **Figure 1**, the gripping member **18** is symmetrical in order to nest within the ramp surfaces **16** of the body **12**. This means that the outer diameter of the gripping member **18** is configured to ride along the ramps **16** of the inner surface.

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of the tool body 12. An example of such a gripping member 18 for the overshot tool 10 is shown in **Figure 2**.

[0009] Referring to **Figure 2**, it can be seen that the gripping member 18 has a generally smooth outer surface, but a grooved inner surface. The inner grooves define wickers 19 used for gripping the outer diameter of a parted drill string or other cylindrical body downhole (sometimes referred to as a "fish"). To accomplish the gripping function, the wickers 19 are configured to define a series of upwardly facing and sharpened edges. The wickers 19 bite into the outer surface of the fish downhole (not shown) in order to accomplish the retrieval function of the overshot tool 10. To this end, the grapple 18 is segmented, allowing it to collapse around the cylindrical item downhole.

[0010] Referring again to **Figure 1**, the overshot tool 10 has an inner bore 15 that extends along its length. The inner bore 15 is dimensioned to receive, or "swallow," the cylindrical body to be retrieved (not shown). The upper end of the cylindrical body to be retrieved tags the lower end of the top sub 11 as it is received within the overshot tool 10. To this end, the bottom end of the top sub 11 defines a reduced inner diameter portion that forms a shoulder 17. As the cylindrical body to be retrieved is received within the bore 15 of the overshot tool 10, the wickers 19 of the gripping member, or "grapple," frictionally engage the outer surface of the cylinder being retrieved. At the same time, as the operator of the rig senses that the cylinder to be retrieved has tagged the sub 17, the operator begins to pull on the working string. As the operator pulls upward on the working string, the smooth outer surface of the grapple 18 is forced to ride downward along the ramped surfaces 16 of the body 12. This, in turn, causes the grapple 18 to more tightly engage the cylinder being retrieved.

[0011] The Bowen-type overshot tool, such as the one shown in **Figure 1**, has provided a reliable means for retrieving parted pipe and other cylindrical bodies which have become lost downhole. This is at least true in the case of more shallow and generally vertical wells. However, in some instances, a string of pipe or tool

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simply cannot be retrieved. In this situation, the overshot tool **10** must be released from the cylindrical pipe segment downhole and then removed from the wellbore. To accomplish separation of the overshot tool **10** from the cylindrical body downhole, the operator of the rig rotates the working string to the right, causing the gripping member **18** to unthread from the gripped cylindrical body downhole. To this end, the wickers **19** on the inner surface of the grapple **18** are cut in a spiraled arrangement to allow "unthreading."

[0012] As noted, the Bowen overshot tool design has been a reliable standard for many years. It has proved successful in the more shallow wells and vertical wells historically drilled. However, during the last decade drilling activity (at least for the major U.S. oil companies) has shifted towards the drilling of deeper wells, and the drilling of lateral wells and extended reach wells. In these instances, the overshot tool **10** cannot be reliably released simply by "unthreading" the connection with the cylindrical body downhole. Those skilled in the art will understand that there is not a direct correlation between the rotation of the drill string at the surface of a well and rotation of the overshot tool downhole. This places the operator of a rig in a difficult dilemma when drilling a deep well or a well that is being drilled at a substantial angle of deviation. In this respect, the operator has two choices: (1) incur the expensive rig time needed in order to attempt to retrieve a downhole tool, such as an expensive drill bit carrying directional equipment, knowing that if the retrieval operation is unsuccessful the overshot tool will have to be left in the hole along with the expensive drilling or other equipment; or (2) avoid this risk and the expense of rig time and drill a new deviated hole in the wellbore at a measured depth above the point at which the drill pipe and connected tools have become lodged.

[0013] In an effort to make overshot tools more easily retrieved in the event of an unsuccessful retrieval operation, hydraulically released overshot tools have been developed. An example of such a hydraulically actuated overshot tool is found in U.S. Patent No. 5,242,201 issued in 1993 to Beeman. The overshot tool in the '201 patent is hydraulically actuated for both catching and for releasing the fishing tool from the "fish." Another example of an overshot tool is seen in U.S. Patent No.

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5,580,114 issued in 1996 to Palmer. The '114 patent represents another hydraulically actuated overshot tool. In the tool of the '114 patent, the cylindrical fish sought to be retrieved is mechanically caught, and hydraulically released.

[0014] In both the '201 Beeman fishing tool and the '114 Palmer fishing tool, a nozzle is placed within the inner bore of the tool. Without describing details of operation of the respective tools, each tool each utilizes a nozzle in order to create a pressure differential above and below the outlet of the nozzle. In the '201 Beeman patent, the nozzle is identified as a tapered segment 56 of a mandrel 10. In the '114 Palmer patent, the nozzle is a collet body, identified as item 28 in FIG. 1, and item 58 in FIG. 5. The pressure drop is created through the injection of fluid into the working string under pressure. The pressure differential acts upon the nozzle, causing the nozzle to act as a piston member.

[0015] The use of hydraulically actuated overshot tools has the advantage of avoiding the necessity of turning the drill string to release the cylindrical body attempting to be retrieved. At the same time, the presence of a nozzle in the overshot tools of the prior art presents several disadvantages. First, the nozzle creates a restriction within the bore for running additional tools downhole. For example, it is sometimes desirable to deploy a shot charge downhole on a wire line. The shot charge is used to create acoustic energy in order to separate joints of pipe for retrieval downhole. Second, the nozzle is sometimes asked to serve a stop function for which it was not designed. In this regard, the top end of the cylindrical body being retrieved most commonly tags the nozzle as the overshot tool is being lowered downhole. This, in turn, jars the nozzle upward relative to the housing of the tool. Again, without discussing details of the overshot tool, this may end up canceling out the piston function of the overshot tool, causing the overshot tool to be irretrievably engaged to the cylindrical body downhole. If this occurs, the overshot tool cannot be retrieved.

[0016] Another disadvantage to the use of hydraulically actuated overshot tools relates to the placement of the proper pressure differential above the nozzle. In this

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respect, the item being retrieved from the well is commonly plugged or severely restricted. An example is where a mud motor is lodged at the lower end of a wellbore. This situation prevents pumping at a high enough flow rate to generate the pressure drop needed across the nozzle in order to actuate the tool. Still further, the inner diameter of the nozzle in a hydraulically actuated overshot tool prevents the use of extensions in the overshot. Sometimes, particularly when retrieving a mud motor, the overshot tool must be configured to "swallow" the shaft in order to frictionally engage the housing of the mud motor.

[0017] It can thus be seen then that a need exists for an improved overshot tool that employs the gripping capability of the Bowen-type overshot tool, but does not require turning of the drill string in order to effectuate a release of the overshot tool from the item being retrieved. Stated another way, a need exists for an overshot tool having the benefits of the Bowen-type fishing tool, but that does not require "unthreading" of the tool from the item being retrieved in the event retrieval is not successful. Further, a need exists for an overshot tool that can be hydraulically released from an item being retrieved, but which does not employ a nozzle within the bore of the overshot tool. Still further, a need exists for an overshot tool which can be hydraulically released from an item attempting to be retrieved from a wellbore, but which accommodates extensions so as to "swallow" elongated portions of the item being retrieved.

**SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

[0018] The present invention provides an improved hydraulic overshot tool. The overshot tool mechanically engages a cylindrical body downhole attempting to be retrieved. In the event retrieval is unsuccessful, the overshot tool may be hydraulically released from the fish. The release function employs a pressure differential within the overshot tool, but without necessity of a nozzle within the bore of the tool.

[0019] The overshot tool first comprises a housing. The housing defines an elongated tubular member having an inner surface and an outer surface. The inner

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surface includes a serrated profile that forms a plurality of ramp surfaces. The ramp surfaces are angled downward. The outer surface of the housing, in turn, forms an annular region between the tool and the surrounding wellbore.

[0020] A gripping member is placed along the inner surface of the tool housing. The gripping member likewise defines a tubular body having an inner surface and an outer surface. The inner surface includes a series of teeth for frictionally engaging the outer surface of a cylindrical body being retrieved. The outer surface, on the other hand, includes a profile that forms a plurality of ramp surfaces. The ramp surfaces are angled upward, and are configured to slidably nest along the ramp surfaces of the housing. The gripping member slides downward relative to the housing when a cylindrical body to be retrieved is frictionally engaged. This causes the gripping member to contract around the fish.

[0021] The overshot tool further comprises a piston. The piston likewise defines a tubular member. The piston is operatively connected to the top end of the gripping member. The piston is movable relative to the housing in order to release the gripping member from the cylindrical body downhole. More specifically, the piston is slidably disposed along the inner surface of an upper portion of the body. Together, the upper and central body portions form the housing. Thus, movement of the piston serves to move the gripping member.

[0022] The piston includes an upper shoulder surface and a lower shoulder surface. The upper shoulder surface is in pressure communication with the annular region around the tool. This is accomplished by fabricating a low-pressure port into the upper body portion. The lower shoulder surface is in pressure communication with the inner surface of the housing. Thus, the injection of fluid into the bore of the tool at a sufficiently high flow rate will cause the lower shoulder surface to act as a piston surface, urging the piston to move upward relative to the housing of the tool. Upward movement of the piston, in turn, pulls the gripping member upwards, allowing it to be released from a cylindrical body lodged within the wellbore.

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[0023] It can thus be seen that hydraulic release of the cylindrical body downhole is accomplished without use of a nozzle in the overshot tool.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

[0024] So that the manner in which the above recited features of the present invention can be understood in detail, a more particular description of the invention, briefly summarized above, may be had by reference to the appended drawings. It is to be noted, however, that the appended drawings (Figures 3-7) illustrate only typical embodiments of this invention and are therefore not to be considered limiting of its scope.

[0025] Figure 1 presents a cross-sectional view of an overshot tool as known in the prior art. This tool is fabricated as a Bowen-type overshot tool.

[0026] Figure 2 presents a perspective view of a gripping member as might be used within the Bowen-type overshot tool of Figure 1. In this arrangement, the gripping member constitutes a helically threaded grapple.

[0027] Figure 3 presents a cross sectional view of an overshot tool of the present invention in one embodiment. In this view, the overshot tool is in its "run-in" position. It can be seen that a cylindrical item is being received within the bore of the overshot tool for later retrieval. Figure 3 is broken into Figure 3(1) and Figure 3(2) for clarification.

[0028] Figure 3A provides a cross-sectional view of the overshot tool of Figure 3. The cross section is taken across line A-A of Figure 3(2). The view is cut through the piston and the central body of the overshot tool.

[0029] Figure 3B shows another cross-sectional view of the overshot tool of Figure 3. In this view, the section is cut across line B-B of Figure 3(2). Visible in this view is the upper end of each of five gripping means within the central body for the tool.

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[0030] Figure 3C is yet another cross-sectional view of the overshot tool of Figure 3. Here, the section is taken across line C-C of Figure 3(2). In this view, the gripping means can be seen within the central body.

[0031] Figure 4 presents a cross-sectional view of the overshot tool of Figure 3. In this view, the cylindrical item to be retrieved has been received within the overshot tool. The top of the item being retrieved has engaged the stop ring of the overshot tool, so that the cylindrical item is ready to be pulled.

[0032] Figure 5 provides a cross-sectional view of the overshot tool of Figure 4, in the next step for retrieving the cylindrical item. In this view, tension is being pulled on the working string (not shown) in order to retrieve the cylindrical item from the wellbore. The gripping means within the overshot tool has frictionally engaged the outer surface of the fish. In addition, the outer surface of the gripping means has advanced downward along the ramped surfaces of the body of the overshot tool. In this way, further gripping force is applied to the cylindrical item being retrieved while tension is being applied to the overshot tool.

[0033] Figure 6 demonstrates a release of the item within the wellbore. Figure 6 shows a cross-sectional view of the overshot tool of Figure 5, but with hydraulic fluid being injected into the wellbore. Hydraulic pressure within the piston has caused the piston to move upwardly within the upper body portion of the tool. This, in turn, pulls the gripping members upwardly along the ramp surfaces of the central body portion of the tool, allowing the gripping members to release the item in the wellbore.

[0034] Figure 7 shows the item within the wellbore having been released. The overshot tool is being removed from the wellbore, leaving the item in the wellbore as it was before Figure 3.

[0035] Figure 8 presents a cross-sectional view of the overshot tool of Figure 3, in a modified embodiment. In this view, the cylindrical housing is lengthened by the insertion of a tubular extension member between the upper body and the central

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body. In this manner, a longer "fish" can be "swallowed." In Figure 8, the item to be retrieved includes a long shaft that has been received within the overshot tool.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**

[0036] **Figure 3** presents a cross-sectional view of an overshot tool **100** of the present invention, in one embodiment. For clarification, the view is broken into **Figure 3(1)** and **Figure 3(2)**. The overshot tool **100** is in its "run-in" position. In this respect, the tool **100** is capable of being run into a wellbore **50** in order to retrieve a cylindrical item **200** downhole. The top end of the cylindrical item **200** can be seen in the view of **Figure 3(2)**, beginning to be received within a bore **115** of the overshot tool **100**.

[0037] The overshot tool **100** generally defines an elongated tubular body having an upper end **102**, a lower end **104**, and a bore **115** formed there between. It is understood that the terms "upper end" and "lower end" are for ease of reference only, and that the tool has utility both in vertical and in laterally or horizontally drilled wellbores. Thus, "upper end" simply refers to the end of the tool **100** most closely connected to the work string, while "lower end" refers to the direction of the tool **100** that first receives an item **200** being fished from the wellbore **50**.

[0038] The overshot tool **100** first comprises a central body **110**. The central body **110** itself defines a tubular member having an upper end **112** and a lower end **114**. Preferably, both the upper **112** and the lower **114** ends of the body **110** include threads placed along the inner surface of the body **110**. The threads enable threaded connections with other members, as will be discussed below.

[0039] The central body **110** has an outer surface and an inner surface. The outer surface is preferably smooth. However, the inner surface of the body **110** includes a serrated profile. In this respect, the inner surface of the central body **110** comprises a plurality of ramped surfaces **116** which form a serrated pattern along the longitudinal plane of the tool **100**. In one arrangement, five separate sets of

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ramp surfaces **116** are provided along the inner diameter of the body **110**. The number of ramp surfaces **116** is not important, so long as there are at least two.

[0040] In the arrangement for the overshot tool **100** of **Figure 3**, the tool **100** next comprises an upper body **120**. The upper body **120** defines a tubular member residing above the central body **110** of the tool **100**. The upper body **120** has an upper end **122** and a lower end **124**. The upper **122** and lower **124** ends are preferably threaded. In the view of **Figure 3**, the upper end **122** includes threads along its inner diameter. The upper end **122**, in turn, threadedly connects to a top sub **101**. The top sub **101** is configured to threadedly connect to a working string, (not shown) for running the overshot tool **100** into and out of the wellbore **50**.

[0041] The lower end **124** of the upper body **120** has a threaded outer diameter. It can be seen in **Figure 3(2)** that the lower end **124** of the upper body **120** threadedly connects to the upper end **112** of the central body **110**. In this manner, the upper **120** and central **110** bodies form a cylindrical housing. To this end, the outer diameter of the upper body **120** preferably aligns with the outer diameter of the central body **110**.

[0042] One or more ports **126** are provided through the upper body **120**. The ports **126** provide fluid communication between the tool **100** and the annulus defined by the tool **100** and the surrounding wellbore **50**. In the operation of the overshot tool **100**, the ports **126** serve as low-pressure ports **126**. As will be described more fully below, the lower pressure ports **126** serve in forming a pressure differential for hydraulically actuating the releasing function of the overshot tool **100**.

[0043] An optional additional body **130** may be placed below the central body **110** to further elongate the housing. As can be seen from the overshot tool **100** shown in **Figure 3(2)**, a tubular guide member **130** may be disposed below the central body **110**. The guide member **130** also has an upper end **132** and a lower end **134**. The upper end **132** of the guide **130** threadedly connects to the lower end **114** of the central body **110**. The lower end **134** of the guide **130** is dimensioned to assist the overshot tool **100** in “swallowing” the cylindrical item **200** downhole being

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retrieved. To this end, the lower end **134** of the guide **130** typically employs a tapered inner dimension **138** in order to serve a guiding function.

[0044] The lower end **114** of the central body **110** may optionally include threads for connecting to other tools downhole. Examples include a wash pipe (not shown) and a circular washover mill (also not shown).

[0045] As can be seen, the overshot tool **100** defines an elongated tubular tool. In the arrangement of **Figures 3(1)-3(2)**, the upper body **120**, central body **110**, and guide body **130** together form the housing for the overshot tool **100**. A uniform outer diameter is preferably formed by these three bodies, **120**, **110**, **130**. However, the inner diameter along the bore **115** of the tool **100** is profiled, as follows.

[0046] First, a stop member **140** is provided along the tool **100**. The stop member **140** creates a shoulder along the bore **115** of the tool **100** for tagging the top end of the item **200** being retrieved. This means that the stop member **140** limits the extent to which the fish **200** may be "swallowed." In one embodiment, the stop member **140** defines a stop ring. The ring **140** is placed along the overshot tool **100** proximate to the upper end **112** of the central body **110**.

[0047] Next, a packoff **150** is provided along the length of the overshot tool **100**. Preferably, the packoff **150** defines a pliable cylindrical item disposed proximate to the lower end **114** of the central body **110**. The packoff **150** serves as a seal along the inner diameter of the overshot tool **100**. In the arrangement shown in **Figure 3**, the packoff **150** includes a recess **151**. The recess **151** forms an upper lip **152** that provides a sealed engagement with a cylindrical item **200** as it is received in the bore **105** of the tool **100**. A spring **153** is disposed within the recess **151** of the packoff **150** to aid in the seal function for the lip **152**.

[0048] An additional profile within the bore **115** of the overshot tool **100** is provided by a gripping apparatus. A gripping apparatus is shown, in one embodiment, at **160** in **Figure 3(2)**. The gripping member **160** includes an outer surface and an inner surface. The outer surface constitutes a serrated profile made

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up of a series of ramp surfaces 166. At least two ramp surfaces 166 are provided along the outer surface of the gripping apparatus 160. The ramp surfaces 166 on the outer surface of the gripping apparatus 160 are configured to nest with and to slidably ride along the ramp surfaces 116 on the inner surface of the central body 110. Relative movement between the ramp surfaces 166, 116 causes the gripping apparatus 160 to move radially inwardly within the bore 115 of the overshot tool 100. Thus, a means is provided for frictionally engaging the cylindrical item 200 in order to retrieve it from the wellbore 50.

[0049] The gripping apparatus 160 also includes an inner surface, as noted. The inner surface is profiled so as to provide a series of gripping teeth, or "wickers" 168. The wickers 168 serve to bite into the outer surface of the fish 200 being retrieved. The wickers 168 are preferably oriented at an upward angle to aid in biting into the fish 200.

[0050] In the arrangement shown in **Figure 3**, the gripping apparatus 160 is defined by a plurality of separate slip members 160'. Each slip member 160' includes a separate upper tang 162 and lower tang 164. The upper tangs 162 are operatively connected to the lower end 174 of a piston 170. The lower tangs 164, in turn, are nested between the central body 110 and a packoff sleeve 158. The packoff sleeve 158 is disposed immediately above the packoff 150. An optional gap 156 is retained between the packoff sleeve 158 and the packoff 150 in order to accommodate any expansion of the packoff 150 downhole.

[0051] In the arrangement for the gripping apparatus 160 shown in **Figure 3**, five separate slip members 160' are shown. However, it is a matter of designer's choice as to the number of slip members 160' and the manner in which they are connected or not. In this respect, an optional slip ring (not shown) may be used to connect the separate slip members 160'. In one arrangement, the slip members 160' substantially recede into the housing, e.g., central body 110, when the slip members 160' nest along the ramp surfaces 116.

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[0052] The overshot tool **100** shown in **Figure 3** next comprises a piston **170**. The piston **170** defines a short tubular body that resides along the inner diameter of the upper body **120**. The piston **170** has an upper end **172** and a lower end **174**. The upper end **172** has a reduced wall thickness so as to form a pocket **176** along the outer diameter of the piston **170**. The pocket **176** aligns with the low-pressure ports **126** in the upper body **120**. The lower end **174** of the piston **170** includes several J-slots **173**. The J-slots **173** are configured to receive shoulders **163** within the upper tang **162** of the gripping apparatus **160**. Thus, the piston **170** and the gripping apparatus **160** are operatively connected. In the arrangement of **Figure 3**, the piston **170** is operatively connected to the separate slip members **160'**. As will be shown, translation of the piston **170** along the longitudinal axis of the overshot tool **100** causes reciprocal translation of the gripping apparatus **160**, i.e., slip members **160'**, along the ramp surfaces **116** of the central body **110**.

[0053] The lower end **174** of the piston **170** also includes a reduced wall thickness portion. The reduced wall thickness portion forms one or more gaps **177** between the outer diameter of the piston **170** and the inner diameter of the central body **110**. One or more set screws **179** are placed along the gaps **177** in order to prevent rotation of the piston **170** within the overshot tool **100**. The inner diameters of the piston **170** is preferably dimensioned to receive a wireline-deployed string shot.

[0054] The piston **170** is biased in a downward position. This, in turn, biases the connected gripping apparatus **160** downward, causing the gripping apparatus **160** to slide radially inward within the bore **115** of the overshot tool **100**. Stated another way, the ramp surfaces **166** of the gripping apparatus **160** are biased to ride downwardly along the reciprocal ramp surfaces **116** of the central body **110**.

[0055] In order to accomplish the biasing function, a biasing member **180** is provided. In the arrangement shown in **Figure 3(1)**, the biasing member **180** defines a spring. More specifically, the spring **180** preferably comprises a nested wave spring. The nested wave spring **180** is biased in compression, meaning that it

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desires to expand in order to push the piston 170 and gripping apparatus 160 downward.

[0056] The wave spring 180 resides within the pocket 176 around the piston 170. The pocket 176 is defined on one side by an upper shoulder 171 on the piston 170. The spring 180 acts against the shoulder 171 of the piston 170 to urge the piston 170 downward. Opposite the shoulder 171 in the pocket 176 is a snap ring 182. The snap ring 182 is fixed within the inner surface of the upper body 120. The snap ring 182 serves as an upper shoulder for the spring 180.

[0057] It should also be noted that the pocket 176 around the upper end 172 of the piston 170 forms a travel area. In this respect, the piston 170 is able to travel upwardly along a substantial length of the pocket 176, subject to overcoming the compressive force within the spring 180. At the same time, seals 175 are disposed at the interface of the outer surface of the piston 170 and the inner surface of the upper body 120. As will be described further below, an increase in hydraulic pressure within the bore 115 of the overshot tool 100 will cause the piston 170 and connected gripping apparatus 160 to move upward relative to the housing, i.e., upper body 120 and central body 110 of the tool 100. Travel of the piston 170 and connected gripping apparatus 160 is limited by the geometry of the pocket 176 and the wave spring 180 nested therein.

[0058] An additional optional feature for the overshot tool 100 is shown in **Figure 3(1)**. That feature is an upper shoulder piece 190. The upper shoulder piece 190 is placed around the upper end 172 of the piston, between the piston 170 and the surrounding upper body 120 and above the snap ring 182. Seals 195 are placed at the interfaces between the shoulder piece 190 and the piston 170, and between the shoulder piece 190 and the surrounding upper body 120. The upper shoulder piece 190 butts against an inner shoulder 121 along the upper body 120. In addition, the snap ring 182 aids in retaining the upper shoulder 190 in its position within the upper body 120. The upper shoulder piece 190 aids in the manufacturing process for the tool 100. More specifically, it aids in the installation of the biasing member 180

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within the piston pocket 176. Of course, it is understood that other configurations, arrangements and details may be provided in the manufacture of the overshot tool without departing from the scope of the present invention.

[0059] Several transverse cross sectional views are provided in order to aid in an understanding of the overshot tool 100 shown in **Figure 3**. First, **Figure 3A** presents a cross-sectional view of the overshot tool 100 of **Figure 3(2)**, cut through line A-A. Visible in **Figure 3A** is the central body 110 of the overshot tool 100. Along the inner surface of the central body 110 is the lower end 174 of the piston 170. Line A-A intersects at the level of the set screws 179. Two set screws 179 are seen. As noted above, the set screws 179 maintain a rotational fix between the piston 170 and the surrounding central body 110. A plurality of slips 160 is seen in **FIG. 3B**. Five separate slips 160 are shown in this embodiment. Together, the slips 160 define the gripping apparatus.

[0060] Next, **Figure 3B** provides a cross sectional view of the overshot tool 100 of **Figure 3(2)**, cut through line B-B. Visible again in this view is the surrounding central body 110 of the tool 100. The thickness of the body 110 at this level is greater than the thickness of the body shown in **Figure 3A**. The plurality of ramp surfaces 116 is seen along the inner surface of the body 110. At this level, the upper tang 162 of the respective slips 160 is seen in cross section is seen in **FIG. 3B**. In addition, the cylindrical stop ring 140 is seen within the slips 160.

[0061] A set screw 119 is also visible in the view of **Figure 3B**. The set screw 119 serves to keep the stop ring 140 from backing off the body 110 of the tool 100. In this respect, the stop ring 140 is preferably hand threaded onto the central body 110 during manufacture.

[0062] Next, **Figure 3C** presents yet another cross sectional view of the overshot tool 100 of **Figure 3(2)**. Here, the cut is taken along line C-C. Line C-C is also cut through the central body 110 of the tool 100; however, line C-C is at a level along the overshot tool 100 that is lower than line A-A and line B-B. The various slip

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members **160'** are seen within the central body **110**. The bottoms of the stop ring **140** is also seen.

[0063] As noted, **Figure 3** shows a cylindrical item **200**, or "fish," to be retrieved within the wellbore **50**. The cylindrical item **200** is first being received within the guide body **130** of the overshot tool **100**. In order to further understand operation of the overshot tool **100** of the present invention, a progressive series of drawings is provided. Use of the overshot tool **100** in various stages of operation is shown in **Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6**.

[0064] Moving now to **Figure 4**, **Figure 4** presents a cross-sectional view of the overshot tool **100** of **Figure 3**. In this view, the fish **200** has been more fully received within the bore **115** of the tool **100**. More specifically, a top end **202** of the cylindrical item **200** has "tagged" the stop member **140** of the overshot tool **100**. At this point, the cylindrical item **200** has been fully received within the guide **130** and central body **110** sections. At the same time, the cylindrical item **200** has been received within the gripping apparatus **160**. A sufficient amount of clearance is designed within the slip members **160'** to permit the outer diameter of cylindrical item **200** to pass within the wickers **168** of the slip members **160'** when the overshot tool **100** is in its run-in position.

[0065] Referring now to **Figure 5**, **Figure 5** presents a next cross-sectional view of the overshot tool **100** of **Figure 3**. In this view, tension is being applied to the working string (not shown) and connected overshot tool **100**. Typically, tension is supplied by the rig operator pulling on the work string, and transmitting the tensile force through the top sub **111** and then to the upper body **120** of the tool **100**.

[0066] Because of the small clearance between the inner surface of the slip members **160'** and the outer surface of the cylindrical item **200** being retrieved, upward movement of the overshot tool **100** causes the wickers **168** (or other frictional gripping surface) along the slip members **160'** to engage and catch the outer diameter of the cylindrical item **200** downhole. Preferably, the individual wickers **168** define sharpened teeth radially disposed along the inner surface of the

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slip members 160' for aid in biting into the cylindrical item 200. As additional tensile force is transmitted through the housing 120, 110 of the overshot tool 100, the housings 120, 110 are raised within the wellbore 50. However, because the slip members 160' have engaged the cylindrical item 200, the slip members 160' resist upward movement. Instead, the slip members 160' are urged to slide relatively downwardly along the respective ramp surfaces 116 of the central body 110. Because of the angle of the ramp surfaces 116, the slip members 160' are driven radially inwardly towards the fish 200. Thus, additional upward force applied to the overshot tool 100 causes additional gripping force to be applied against the fish 200 as retrieval is attempted.

[0067] At this point, it should be noted that the overshot tool 100 has utility in any type of well, whether it is being completed vertically, horizontally, laterally or in an extended reach arrangement. Tagging of the top of a cylindrical item 200 downhole, whether it be a joint of drill pipe, a cylindrical housing from a mud motor, or some twisted off piece of tool, can be tagged against the stop member 140. In this way, positioning of the overshot tool 100 along the cylindrical item being retrieved 200 can be reliably determined regardless of wellbore configuration. Additional benefits of the overshot tool 100 will be realized from the discussion of the hydraulic release function of the tool 100, below.

[0068] In many wellbore completion operations, the operator is unable to retrieve the cylindrical item 200 from within the wellbore 50. This can be attributed to a variety of causes, including collapse of the hole around a lower portion of the drill string, a highly deviated angle of wellbore orientation causing frictional engagement between the drill string and surrounding wellbore, and other factors. In any instance, it is desirable for the operator to be able to release the overshot tool 100 from the cylindrical item 200 downhole in the event the fishing operation is unsuccessful. In this way, the operator is not placed in the embarrassing situation of leaving more equipment downhole than was originally stuck.

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[0069] With the known Bowen-type overshot tool (**Figure 1**), release of the tool **10** from an item stuck downhole must be accomplished manually. As described above, the operator must rotate the drill string to the right in an attempt to unthread the tool **10** from the stuck item. However, in the instance of extended reach wells, deviated wells or even very deep substantially vertical wells, rotation of the working string does not necessarily impart the needed rotation of the overshot tool. Accordingly, the overshot tool **100** of the present invention provides a mechanism by which the tool **100** can be hydraulically released. More specifically, the overshot tool **100** is released by the injection of fluid into the bore **115** of the tool **100**.

[0070] **Figure 6** presents the releasing step for the overshot tool **100** of **Figure 3**. In this view, the overshot tool **100** is being released from the cylindrical item **200** within the wellbore **50**. Hydraulic force (indicated by arrow **P**) is being applied within the bore **115** of the overshot tool **100**. To accomplish this, fluid is injected down the working string, the top sub **111**, and into the bore **115** of the tool **100**. Increased pressure within the bore **115** is created by increasing the flow rate through the working string. It is also anticipated that some flow restriction will exist downhole below the overshot tool **100**, contributing to the needed pressure drop. The restriction may be in the form of the drill bit, a downhole mud motor, another tool, or even portions of formation collapse itself opposite the bit. In any instance, a pressure differential is created between the inner bore **115** of the tool **100**, and the surrounding annular region.

[0071] As fluid is injected into the overshot tool **100** under pressure, it invades the gap **177** formed around the lower end **174** of the piston. An upper shoulder **178** is provided along the gap **177** in order to create a piston area. Seals **175** seal the interfaces along the outer surface of the piston **170**, i.e., along the inner diameter of the upper body **120**, and along the inner surface of the central body **110**. Thus, fluid injected into the overshot tool **100** under pressure acts upwardly against shoulder **178** of the piston **170**.

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[0072] As noted above, low pressure ports **126** are provided in the upper body **120** of the tool **100**. This allows for pressure communication from the annulus into the pocket **176** formed between the piston **170** and surrounding upper body **120**. As fluid continues to be injected into the bore **115** of the tool **100** at a higher rate, the pressure within the gap **177** becomes significantly greater than pressure within the pocket **176**. This, in turn, causes the piston **170** to move upwardly relative to the tool housing, i.e., upper body **120** and central body **110**. Ultimately, this pressure differential exceeds the downward force applied by the biasing member, i.e., nested wave spring **180**, causing the upper shoulder **171** in the piston **170** to travel upward in the pocket **176**.

[0073] As described above, the piston **170** is operatively connected to the slip members **160'**. Upward movement of the piston **170** causes the slip members **160'** to slide upwardly along the inclined or ramped surfaces **116** in the central tool body **110**. This, in turn, causes the slip members **160'** to be retracted radially inward and away from the cylindrical item **200** within the wellbore **50**. In this manner, the gripping apparatus **160** is released from the fish **200** downhole.

[0074] **Figure 7** presents yet a next progression in operation of the overshot tool **100** of **Figure 3**. In **Figure 7**, the overshot tool **100** is in its released position. This position is identical to the run-in position shown in **Figure 3**. The overshot tool **100** is now moving out of the hole, leaving the cylindrical item **200** permanently within the wellbore **50**. Those of ordinary skill in the art will understand that, unless the cylindrical item **200** can be retrieved, a whipstock (not shown) will need to be run into the wellbore and a new lateral wellbore drill at a measured depth above the cylindrical item **200**. At the same time, the rig operator is spared the embarrassment and considerable additional expense of having to leave not only the cylindrical item **200** (and any connected expensive equipment) downhole, but his own fishing tool as well.

[0075] It can be seen from **Figures 3-7** that the overshot tool **100** of the present invention can be released from a cylindrical item downhole without necessity of a

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nozzle. This provides significant advantages for the overshot tool 100 of the present invention, as compared to overshot tools of the prior art.

[0076] It can also be seen that a new method is provided for retrieving a tubular body from a wellbore. In summary, the method provides a first step of running an overshot tool into the wellbore. The overshot tool is the tool 100 described above. The tool 100 is run into the wellbore on a working string. Next, the tubular body to be retrieved is tagged using the overshot tool 100. Finally, the working string is pulled, thereby causing the gripping apparatus 160 of the overshot tool 100 to frictionally engage and grip the tubular item.

[0077] If it is desirable to release the tubular body from the overshot tool 100, an additional step may be taken. In this respect, fluid is injected into the working string and the connected overshot tool 100, under pressure. This serves to release the gripping apparatus 160 from the tubular body.

[0078] Finally, **Figure 8** presents a cross-sectional view of the overshot tool of **Figure 3**, in a modified embodiment. In this view, the cylindrical housing is lengthened by the insertion of a tubular extension member 120' between the upper body 120 and the central body 110. In this manner, a longer "fish" 200' can be "swallowed." In **Figure 8**, the item to be retrieved 200' includes a long shaft 205 that has been received within the overshot tool. The item 200' is representative of, for example, a joint of drill pipe that has parted. The gripping apparatus 160 is able to frictionally engage the joint 210 below the part. Alternatively, the fish 200' is representative of a mud motor having a parted shaft 205. The gripping apparatus 160 is able to frictionally engage the housing 210 of the mud motor.

[0079] While the foregoing is directed to embodiments of the present invention, other and further embodiments of the invention may be devised without departing from the basic scope thereof, and the scope thereof is determined by the claims that follow.